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Schoharie Reservoir - New York City Water Supply System


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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Update on North River Wastewater Treatment Plant Fire and Impacts

### Overview of Incident

The North River Wastewater Treatment Plant was taken offline Wednesday afternoon following a four-alarm fire in the engine room that started at approximately 11:45 am. At approximately 5:15 pm Wednesday, untreated wastewater started to be directly discharged into the Hudson River. The North River plant has been in operation since 1986 and treats an average of 120 million gallons of wastewater a day from Manhattan's west side from Bank Street through northern Manhattan.

### Status of Plant Operations

Yesterday, DEP made significant progress in making the plant operational by bringing both engines back online and as a result all untreated discharges into the Hudson River stopped last night as of approximately 9:30 pm. This morning, at approximately 5:00 am, an electricity feeder that supplies power to the North River Wastewater Treatment Plant went offline because of an electrical utility manhole fire. Con Edison was able to isolate the failed feeder, which helped DEP restore internal power. Both engines started again in less than an hour, but as a result of the power interruption a pump connected to one of the engines did not take flow for several hours due to a mechanical issue related to the power stoppage. Because of this, the plant temporarily was able to treat roughly 104 million gallons a day of wastewater with primary treatment and chlorine disinfection; and untreated wastewater at a rate of roughly 15-25 million gallons a day was for several hours being discharged into the Hudson River. DEP technicians and contractors assessed the pump to the engine and were able to get it back online around 2:00 pm this afternoon. Because of that, the rate of discharges continued to decline and stopped at approximately 3:30 pm.

According to the city's Department of Health, this does not in any way change the current health advisories that are in place. People should continue to follow the advice recommended below in the Environmental, Health and

### MORE INFORMATION

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A to Z Index

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Community Impacts section of this release.

Of the plant's five engines used to pump wastewater into the facility, only two engines need to be operating during dry weather to handle the wastewater flow into the plant. The wastewater that is being processed is receiving primary treatment and chlorine disinfection, which are the key components of the sewage treatment process needed to restore water quality to the extent necessary to eliminate advisories at area beaches. DEP is still working around the clock to stabilize the operations that have been restored, and DEP has made significant progress on the systems necessary to perform secondary treatment.

As a backup in the event of further operational disruptions, DEP is in the process of installing an additional pumping system in case any further issues with the existing system arise. In order to minimize the discharge of wastewater from the plant, DEP yesterday began performing some small "pump arounds"—pumping wastewater flow out of an 84-inch sewer at West 117th St. in Manhattan that normally flows to the plant and pumping into a 42-inch sewer at Frederick Douglass Boulevard and 117th, which flows to the Wards Island Wastewater Treatment Plant. .

### Environmental, Health and Community Impacts

The New York City Health Department has issued beach pollution advisories for the following locations which took effect yesterday morning:

- ▶ South Beach in Staten Island
- ▶ Midland Beach in Staten Island
- ▶ Cedar Grove Beach in Staten Island
- ▶ Sea Gate in Brooklyn

Beaches and status changes will be available to the public through website postings at the City's beach website [www.nyc.gov/health/beach](http://www.nyc.gov/health/beach), at [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov) under NYC Right to Know, and at [www.nyc.gov/health](http://www.nyc.gov/health), the City Information Hotline 311, Health Department press releases, and those who have signed up to Notify NYC will receive up to date status information relating to public beaches via Twitter, RSS, email and SMS.

Water quality modeling indicates that these beaches have been potentially impacted by the untreated sewer discharges from the North River Wastewater Treatment Plant. Though the beaches are not closed, the New York City Department of Health does not recommend swimming and bathing until this advisory is lifted, especially for people with underlying medical conditions, or young or elderly people who may be more likely to get sick if beach water is swallowed. Signs will be placed at the beach entrances to alert the public to the risk. Alternative beaches, such as Coney Island Beach, Rockaway Beach, Orchard Beach, Manhattan Beach and Wolfe's Pond Beach, remain open and unaffected based on current water quality modeling. Fifty-four outdoor pools are open for swimming as well. Call 311 to find the pool nearest to you.

Additionally, based on recommendations from NYC Health, the Hudson River, the East River from the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge to Verrazano Bridge, the Harlem River and the Kill Van Kull to the Goethals Bridge will not be fit for recreational activities such as swimming, canoeing, kayaking, windsurfing or any other water activity that would entail possible direct contact until the recommended use

restriction is lifted. Also, consuming fish caught from these areas is not recommended for anyone until the pollution advisory is resolved. It is recommended that individuals catch and release fish back into the water.

The New York City Police Department Harbor Unit will be patrolling near the plant to ensure boaters keep a proper distance. The city Parks Department is restricting access to the river at the 79th Street Boat Basin and placing signs prohibiting kayaking, canoeing and other recreational activities from all city boat launch sites along the Hudson River and other appropriate sites. The Hudson River Park Trust as well as the Battery Park City Authority are also installing similar signs at sites under their jurisdiction.

DEP and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene continue to take samples in the harbor and at permitted beaches that could potentially be impacted. For the most up-to-date information, go to the NYC Health website at [www.nyc.gov/health](http://www.nyc.gov/health), the DEP website at [www.nyc.gov/dep](http://www.nyc.gov/dep), or call 311. Individuals can also receive proactive alerts by signing up through 311 for Notify NYC, the city's official source for information about emergency events and important city services. Riverbank State Park, located atop the treatment plant, re-opened at 2:00 pm today. Westchester County and New Jersey DEP are also performing water sampling and water flow modeling to determine any impacts on their rivers and beaches.

DEP will continue to provide routine updates on the status of the plant's operations and public health impacts in collaboration with the Health Department.

#### **Related Documents and Links**

- ▶ [Harbor water quality status](#)
  
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